

# THE CHRISTIAN FREEMAN.

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## NATURAL RELIGION.

Two very different meanings are applied to the term, Natural Religion. One of these is, That religious knowledge, which may be obtained without direct assistance from the Scriptures, but with the aid furnished by ancient traditional revelations. In this sense it is used by the Westminster Divines; and in this sense it is perfectly true, as taught by them, that "the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence, do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable." According to the account given by an inspired apostle, of the religious knowledge to be found among heathens, "it was manifest in them, for God showed it unto them." The knowledge of certain great truths having been first communicated, the works of creation and providence serve as an important and useful commentary upon these, though they do not themselves actually present new discoveries to unassisted reason. "The world by wisdom knew not God." "The invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood" (not discovered) "by the things which are made."

Natural religion, however, in modern times, has been very extensively used to signify a religious knowledge, acquirable by means of the intellectual powers, without any direct or traditional assistance from revelation; and from motives on which it is not our province to judge, most zealous exertions have been made to enlarge its boundaries.

Were these efforts made in consistency with sound reasoning, and not calculated to detract from the word of God, we should be very far from objecting to them. Long may human reason wear every trophy which she has fairly won. There has been much deception, however, on this subject, which we wish to expose—an assumption of positions without examination, and a dealing in lofty assertion, wholly unworthy of true philosophy.

That God speaks to man in the language of action, as well as of words, we readily admit. Though creation and providence have no voice, they teach many lessons of wisdom. But we not only meet by a direct contradiction, the position of the Theist—That God's language of action is sufficient, and therefore Revelation unnecessary; but we reject a very considerable proportion of the claims which have been set up on behalf of natural religion, even by many acknowledging the truth of Divine Revelation.

Much confusion has arisen from the different meanings which have been attached to the term natural religion; and, while at one time, it is used to denote that religion which can be discovered by unassisted reason alone, and at another, every thing attainable by the aid of primitive revelation; or, in a wide sense still, every thing in religion of which, when revealed, unprejudiced reason approves—men often forget how very different it is to make a discovery, and to be satisfied of the truth of a discovery when already made. How very simple, for example, does the art of printing seem; yet fourteen centuries of the christian era passed over the world before that simple discovery was made. In this very confusion, however, between what is discoverable by reason, and what commends itself to reason, much of the prevailing error respecting natural religion has its origin.

Men receive, by tradition, revelation, made before all writing truth reaches them directly, or indirectly, through the written revelation; and they, forthwith, flatter themselves that the discovery of truth so plain lies within the reach of human power. To receive truth directly from God, and solely as a free gift, is humiliating; and man's proud heart struggles hard against it, while pride is gratified by any thing in the form of a discovery.

The melancholy fact is this, whatever be the motives or reasons for it, that exertions are each day made from the pulpit, and the press, and the chair of philosophy, to exalt natural religion at the expense of revealed; and many public teachers manifest an anxiety to be as little indebted as possible to the word of God. Indeed, if the fine theories of natural religion which they build, were true, and discoverable by means of human reason, it might be a subject of serious inquiry, What necessity is there for the Bible? and the spirit, evidenced by too many, would force charity herself to say, that they are not very anxious about the result of such an inquiry.

It is not our intention, at present, to argue the question,

Whether the unassisted reason of fallen man, without any assistance from the Word of God, as now written, or from the tradition of a primeval revelation, could arrive at the knowledge of even the fundamental truth of all religion, the existence of God. It is, at least, evident, that such a question could not possibly be subjected to the test of experiment; for where is the nation under heaven which can be considered as completely devoid of all benefit from the traditional remnant of that knowledge which God communicated to man at first.—Neither is it our intention now to fix the boundaries of natural religion; our only design being to throw out a few hints calculated to teach great moderation and humility in attributing to unassisted reason the power of making discoveries in religion.

The notion of man's original state having been that of barbarism, is now acknowledged by all wise men as fit only for tales of romance; and facts of history have fully corroborated the statement of Moses, that the whole human family sprung from one head. God made that common head, in matured strength of body and of mind; he made him responsible to his Creator for his conduct; and therefore his Creator's will must have been made known to him, else he could not have been justly punishable for disobedience. God fitted him for society—and did he leave him utterly ignorant of moral good and evil, and unable to judge what was right or what wrong towards his neighbour? A being left thus helpless and savage, would have been utterly unworthy of a perfect Creator, and to punish him would have been injustice. But God did not leave man to tedious investigation, and slow deduction, for discovering those truths which are essential to happiness and to purity of worship. He immediately made known to him truths which he could not have discovered, but which immediately commended themselves to the reason of the upright being whom he had formed.

I. Even by those who refuse the Old Testament as a revelation from God, it is acknowledged to be the oldest book in the world. It contains the only rational account on record of creation and the origin of man. Man's primeval state, however, as there represented, was not a state of barbarism, but of close intercourse with the eternal fountain of all knowledge; for, in the days of primitive purity there was happy intercourse between heaven and earth; God made revelations of himself to man, and man walked with God.

II. Though Moses speaks of discoveries in the arts, by men

who came to be styled Fathers of different professions, yet he never furnishes the slightest hint that either he, or any of his cotemporaries or predecessors, discovered such truths as the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, the accountability of man. These and similar truths were in the world before him, generally recognized by successive generations of patriarchs, and carried away back to the original stock, and with them not the fruit of lengthened investigation, for the knowledge of such truths was essential to the performance of that worship which was offered in the infancy of time.

III. Though we have many histories and writings on morality and religion, transmitted from very remote ages of Paganism, and though we possess writings of the most eminent Heathen sages, yet in none of them do we find a single claim laid to the discovery of one of those important religious and moral truths found in their writings; but on the contrary, we find them always referring the knowledge of them back to more remote ages, and expressing their opinion that in ages more remote still, ("golden ages,") primitive fathers conversed with heaven and drew thence knowledge of truths above the reach of mortals.

IV. Even those truths which we are accustomed to consider most simple, and most easily accessible by human reason, were either not held at all by the wisest of the Heathen sages, or were held with a very trembling hand, and in connexion with an immense mass of absurdity and wickedness. Let us take one or two examples. The existence of one God is represented as so plain and palpable, that it would at once have suggested itself to unassisted reason. Yet what is the simple fact? The Greeks and Romans, with all their civilization and philosophy, were worshippers of a multitude of gods. In the polite Athens, it was more easy, according to the proverb, to find a god than a man—and even the temple at Athens dedicated to "The Unknown God," received this inscription either from a desire to pay an idolatrous homage to the "Unknown" god of the Jews, of whose ineffable name the Athenians had heard an indistinct rumour, or from their having been unable to determine to what god they owed their deliverance, when, by the advice of Epimenides, they sacrificed the wandering sheep wherever they had lain down.

The great Aristotle, before whose genius Europe bowed for centuries, believed in the eternity of the world, both in matter and form. The Ionic, Pythagoric, Platonic, and Stoic schools of philosophy, all agreed in asserting the eternity of matter.

thus destroying the notion of a first cause and of creation; and Plato, who has been styled the Moses of philosophers, believed in two eternal and independent causes of all things.

Passing by the doctrine of one supreme, all-wise, all-directing Providence, of which the Heathens had no definite ideas, let us ask what were their attainments on the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, which is now set forth by some as so easily attainable by the unassisted powers of human reason? though Dr. Priestly maintains that its immateriality cannot be proved; and Dr. Reid, in very strange language for a philosopher, tells us that the idea of a mind is suggested, "we do not know how; we conjure it up by a kind of natural magic, which at once gives a conception, and creates a belief of it."—Even on this doctrine, apparently so near to man, there was the greatest uncertainty. Those who read carefully the whole writings of Cicero, Plato, and Seneca, whatever fine passages they may find in different parts, will have no reason, upon the whole, to be satisfied that even these most eminent oracles of heathen wisdom entertained a definite or decided belief on this important subject. Look again to the state of modern heathenism. Why has no Dr. Samuel Clarke risen up among all the millions professing the religion of Budhu, to teach them "*a priori*," or "*a posteriori*," either the existence of one great first cause, or the immortality of the soul. The religion of Budhu is the most extensive in the world, claiming as its own, Tartary, China, Japan, and all the countries between China and the Burrampooter; and yet over this vast domain of darkness, neither God, nor Providence, nor future state, in our sense of the terms, is acknowledged at all.

Why then, we ask, this overwhelming difference between the giant spirits of olden times, and the sorriest dabblers in philosophy now?—why this unaccountable inferiority, not only of all the subtlety of the first and greatest of the followers of Budhu, but of the very noblest ornaments of Greece and Rome, to the most commonplace proser who can print an essay, or deliver a lecture or sermon, on morality in these days? How to the one is all dark as night, to the other all light as day? Can it be because the one has *not* the Bible, while the other has?

V. Even those ideas on such fundamental truths as we have named, which were held with so trembling a hand by the early heathen sages, may be traced back from them away to remote ages, and the birth-place of knowledge may be shown to be the same as that which Moses represents as the cradle of the human family.

By similar manifestations, and converse with those vouchsafed to our first parents, were distinguished patriarchs among their immediate posterity made acquainted with God ; and the information graciously conferred, in the very morning of human life, continued to receive additions at sundry times, and in divers manners. When the sons of men fled from the monument of their pride and their folly, on the plains of Shinar, they took with them the religion of their fathers into the various lands through which they were scattered ; and however the immediate descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth were scattered over the world, it is utterly impossible that the remembrance of such truths as had been universally acknowledged, though alas, not practised, before the flood, and of which the flood had given so terrific an illustration, should soon pass away from their minds.

The purity of primitive revelation was, we grant, soon corrupted, and much of it gradually lost ; and even among some tribes, such as portions of the inhabitants of Africa, and the Aborigines of New Holland, the notion of a Supreme Being is, perhaps, entirely lost, but still the primitive revelation continued mingled up with the superstitions, even of idolaters made upon their idols, and their choicest philosophy was only a distortion and caricature of great doctrines, which had been originally derived directly from the source of infinite wisdom.

The most ignorant among the heathen had more knowledge and more opportunities of acquiring information than they improved ; hence the spirit of inspiration could justly charge upon them as a crime, that "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God."

Even in the rudest forms of idolatrous worship we can trace more or less obscure references to some of the leading facts and doctrines of Revelation. The cosmogony of the ancient Phenicians is evidently founded on the account of creation given by Moses ; and a similar assertion may be made respecting the ancient Greek philosophy. Travel north, south, east, and west, and you find the period employed in creation used as a measure of time, though no natural changes point it out as a measure, as is the case with the month and year. Consult the heathen classics, the records of our Scythian ancestors, the superstitions of Egypt, of the Indies, both east and west, and, indeed, all the varied forms in which superstition has presented herself, and in one or in all you meet with evidences of a universal flood, of man's fall, of the serpent having been the instrument in it, of propitiating sacrifice, and the expectation of a great deliverer.

VI. The knowledge of the leading doctrines of true religion was by no means confined to Abraham and his descendants. Melchizedec, as Priest of the most high God, had people for whom he officiated ; the king of the Philistines, and his subjects, both in the days of Abraham and of Isaac, held the same religious principles as these favourites of heaven.— The king of Egypt, in Joseph's day, acknowledged Joseph's God ; and even in Canaan, the strong hold of idolatry, Israel found some who acknowledged Jehovah to be “God in heaven above and in the earth beneath.”

Abraham's family were, however, the distinguished depositaries of the true religion ; and by revelation to him who was emphatically the friend of God, the true religion was greatly enlarged and enriched. The Israelites were God's witnesses ; and in many ways he called them forth as witnesses for him in the presence of the nations. Did the plagues of Egypt, the passage of the Red Sea, the possession of Canaan, excite no interest in surrounding kingdoms, and attract no attention to the religion of God's peculiar people ? Were all the embassies of David and of Solomon, their leagues and commercial intercourse with neighbouring countries ; were those who came to them from afar, or the Gentile proselytes who visited the far-famed temple, no instruments of making very widely known the sublime truths of religion professed by a people so remarkably distinguished, so signally delivered, and so abundantly blessed ? Even the wickedness of Abraham's posterity was over-ruled for the purpose of spreading throughout the world the knowledge of the truth. Israel, when carried away captive, bore her religion with her to foreign lands ; she practised its rites before strangers ; she made her oppressors acquainted with its doctrines ; and, at times, even in her lowest degradation, her God wrought great wonders for her in the sight of the heathen ; so that they, filled with admiration, exclaimed, “The Lord hath done great things for them.” Thus, in Egypt, in Persia, in Chaldea, opportunities were offered of becoming acquainted with the religion and the sacred writings, of those whom God himself taught, and governed. The knowledge of these continued to live long in those countries throughout which the Jews themselves had been scattered, and when the philosophers of Greece and Rome set forth on their travels for the acquisition of knowledge, they visited those very countries in which the Israelites had dwelt before them, and where the knowledge of what heaven communicated to them had been widely disseminated.

Those acquainted with the religion of the North American Indians, will see in it additional illustrations of this subject, while the anecdote in our last number respecting the black Jews, on the coast of Malabar furnishes still fuller confirmation. Thus, in many ways, Divine revelation spread; thus, though sadly corrupted, it became part of the philosophy, as well as of the religion of heathenism; and, at this hour, the sublimest passages of heathen poetry, which elevate the thoughts of our children, have borrowed their sublimity and their glory from that revelation which God himself gave, and which, in many different ways, was spread wide and far over the globe.

Having, however, exceeded the limits which we proposed, we conclude with the expression of a hope, that these hints may be useful, not only in exposing that dishonesty which enriches and adorns natural religion, by borrowing, without acknowledgment, from revelation, but in preventing rash assertion with respect to the powers of human reason, and promoting a deeper veneration for the volume of Divine Inspiration.

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### "THE SAINTS."

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MANY of our readers will be able to find among their acquaintances, interesting illustrations of the following narrative.

In the family of a respectable and prosperous man, his daughter, M. was, some years since, the gayest of the gay. Her father would have felt it an insult to be called irreligious. He did, it is true, indulge at times, in an oath; and was overtaken occasionally by the bottle; and, though his day of pleasure, and of giving entertainments, was the Sabbath, this did not prevent the female part of his family from attending pretty frequently on, at least, one service of public worship; and when a public collection for charitable institutions, (not Missions, or such like,) was taken, he was regularly in his place, and subscribed liberally, especially if he was a collector. His household servants were allowed to attend public worship every third Sabbath; and on each Sabbath evening, unless when there was company, a chapter and prayer, and sometimes a short discourse on morality, were read. Nevertheless he hated "the Saints," and trained up his family to hold them in abhorrence.

Nature had conferred upon his daughter M. many attrac-

tions ; and often had her mother exerted herself to set them off to the best advantage, when preparing her for the front box of the theatre, or the most conspicuous place at the ball. At the close of an unusually gay winter, she went, on a visit to a relation, with a sad heart, for she had heard that her friend was one of “the Saints,” and expected nothing but psalm-singing and gloom. For some time she felt quite out of her element. She could not, however, but observe the happiness which reigned in the family, and the peace and order which pervaded the whole household. The loveliness of religion, as illustrated in their character, attracted her attention ; she was delighted with the placidity of their temper, their self-command and cheerfulness ; she was won by their continual exertions to make herself and all around them happy ; though she had no relish for their Sunday-school teaching, and distribution of tracts, and visiting of the poor, yet she could not but sympathize in the pleasure which such exercises afforded them. She began to entertain a more charitable opinion of their motives, and to think favourably of the religion which influenced them. The minister, too, on whose preaching they attended, had nothing of that repulsiveness which she expected to find ; on the contrary, his manner was pleasing—his elocution graceful, and most serious—the whole external service was attractive and impressive ; and there were in the devotions of his people a zeal, and energy, and satisfaction, to which she had been previously a stranger. Her prejudices were gradually dispelled ; her attention was fixed by what she saw and heard ; and what she saw and heard induced her to read her Bible, and pray for understanding and feeling while reading her Bible. The result was simple—she returned to her home a changed character—the objects of her love and of her hatred, of her hope and of her fear, all changed ; and not long had she been at home till her parents, with a harshness which they had never previously displayed towards her, pronounced her to be “a confirmed *Saint*.” They expostulated, they threatened, they drew mirth and folly round her, to dispel what they called her gloom ; they tried change of air and scene for banishing what they supposed to be melancholy ; and when, at length, they pronounced her incorrigible, their whole manner towards her changed, and she now lives in the family almost as a thing forgotten ; a disgrace, as her mother says, to her connexions, and whose funeral she would rather have attended than see her as she is now ; and all this, not because she is disobedient, for never before did her parents find her so amenable—not because her disposition has undergone any

change for the worse ; on the contrary, mildness and sweetness of temper, and unaffected kindness, in a remarkable manner, adorn her ; and all the domestics would do any thing to please her ; yet, in her father's family, she lives as an alien and an outcast, because, according to the slang of the day, she is one of "*the Saints.*"

The case thus given for illustration is by no means rare ; we know a number of similar instances, giving triumphant refutation to the doctrine so sedulously propounded by some, that few or no conversions need be expected in these "last days," when the Gospel is represented as being preached only as a witness against those who refuse to receive it. We remember well what the characters of these same individuals were a few years ago. How vain and giddy was that thoughtless young thing that is now so humble, so serious, yet so cheerful ; and with what contempt, a few years back, did that interesting young man talk of "*the Saints,*" whom we found yesterday reading the Bible to the poor dying widow, to whom, and her helpless family he has been, for some time, the only support !

What wonderful changes does the religion of the cross produce when received by faith into the heart ! What all the power of compulsion could not effect ; what the whole philosophy of ancient or modern times never could accomplish, follows, in the most natural manner, from the belief of a few simple truths brought home to the heart with demonstration of the spirit, and with power. No wonder that the world should be unable to comprehend this ; and that the wicked should be surprised that their converted companions should no longer run with them to the same excess of riot ; yet to speak contemptuously of such is inconsistent with all sound philosophy and all common sense.

What are some of the grounds on which it is customary for the world, perverting a most honourable title conferred by the New Testament, contemptuously to nickname true Christians "*the Saints.*" They frequently converse on religious subjects ; they are regular in attendance on the means of religious improvement ; they are scrupulously guarded in conversation and conduct ; they are unwearied in their exertions to promote, not the temporal, merely, but the eternal interests of their brethren. We entreat the world, therefore, to meet us fairly on their own ground, and calmly inquire whether there is any foundation for such contempt, and whether more

true wisdom dwells with those sneeringly styled "the Saints," or with those who profess to despise them.

It is granted that the soul is of infinite value; that the present life is but as nothing in comparison with eternity; and that the immortal being is destined to live through that eternity. Oh, then, can it be folly for that immortal being most seriously to inquire respecting that eternity which is before him! Shall he content himself with looking back upon joys gone for ever, or forward to the fulfilment of hopes confined within a few short years, and cast no glance beyond that bound which separates all that is unsatisfactory and transient, from all that is perfect and eternal? Is that, indeed, true wisdom which confines the immortal spirit within the bounds of mortality; and are they fools whose hopes and joys, and objects most beloved, are in the regions of immortality? If there be any truth at all in the religion of the Bible, (and we have no concern at present with those who deny it,)—a religion which reveals man's liability to eternal torment, and God's willingness to save, there is nothing surely in all the world so sublime, so important, so worthy of special regard. What question in science could, for a moment, hold comparison with this—Shall *I* be happy or miserable for ever? The philosopher may, by his discoveries, spread a glory over his own age, and cause the light of scientific truth to shine bright and far through ages to come; but oh! if he should die without this chief of all inquiries settled, the blackness of eternal night will close over him; and while successive schools of philosophy walk in the light which he cast around them, the monument recording his discoveries will cover the grave of one for ever lost; whose place through eternity will be the hopeless prison-house of torment and darkness, and despair.

What, then, though many of the great and worldly wise have lived as though there were no hereafter, and spent that time which God gave them to prepare for eternity, in exertions, alas too successful, for preventing their minds from turning inward on themselves, shall this warrant us in pronouneing him to be a fool, who, with a proper apprehension of the value of the soul, and the importance of eternity, "by patient continuance in well-doing, seeks for glory, honour, and immortality?" He alone is wise, however ignorant the world may esteem him, who, while others are busied and careful about many things, chooses that good part which shall never be taken away. That alone is true wisdom, whether it appears in the

little child or in the man of grey hairs, which seeks "first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof," for "all other things shall be added thereto."

Is there any folly in making subjects of the greatest importance the most frequent subjects of conversation; and is even one to be stamped as irrational who delights most to converse on that which most occupies his thoughts. Nay, are not the irrational who use every little art to turn the current of conversation, even in hours of seriousness, away from matters of eternal moment; and who, when even a dear friend is going the way of all flesh, count it cruel to direct his thoughts to eternity; and stamp as rudeness every thing exceeding "an indirect hint," even at the side of his death bed, about that undiscovered country to which he is going?

To none are the world more ready to apply the term "saint" than to persons labouring under serious alarm from an apprehension of danger on account of sin; and yet is not such alarm the very essence of true wisdom? That the wicked shall be turned into hell, all but infidels acknowledge; and they acknowledge, too, that the torments of this place of everlasting punishment are beyond expression dreadful. Suppose, then, a person having hitherto lived thoughtless and careless, should be awakened to a sense of his truly alarming situation, seeing himself bound to life by the slenderest thread, and yet by that thread suspended over the place of eternal misery—he reads that without holiness no man shall see God, yet he has no that holiness—he hears even the messengers of Jesus, the merciful Saviour, saying, "He that believeth not shall be damned," and yet he does not believe—is there nothing here to create alarm; nothing to fill the whole mind with the most anxious and fearful solicitude?

Have you ever, roused from your sleep at midnight by the cry of fire, rushed towards the devouring flames, and seen, at an upper window, the form of a fellow-creature, with death before him, and a more horrid death behind: what then filled your heart, even to bursting, with intense anxiety? The fear that a human life was about to be lost. Had that life been your wife's, your sister's, your own child's, what language could have described your agony! But what is the life even of your dearest friend, in comparison with your own; and what is the loss of your life, in comparison with the loss of your soul.—Oh, what a world of thought is comprised in that one dreadful word, **LOST!** The sympathies of the world are with the lone widow who carries, through many a solitary year, the

weeds of mourning for an honoured lord ; and they tell, with commendation, of the affectionate parent, on whose cheek, after the death of a darling child, no smile of gladness played : yet hope was there ; and hope fondly cherished, too, that this husband, or child, had gone where friends in Jesus shall soon meet to part no more. But, should the bereaved heart hear, from the other world, a voice of truth, saying, “ he whom you mourn is lost, for ever lost, in hell ; ” oh ! where is consolation now ; without trust in God, that one word, *lost*, has overwhelmed the soul for ever : the mourner droops her head to lift it in joy no more ; and,

“ Memory, like a drop that night and day,  
Falls cold and ceaseless, wears the heart away.”

Were any individual assured that the seal of eternal perdition had already been fixed upon his soul, what to him would be all the pleasures which the world affords ? In vain for him the bloom of spring promises the fruits of autumn ; he is going to the place where no hope points to future joy ; but where the prospect of the future aggravates present misery. In vain the innocence of youth tries to win him with its smile, and matured virtue puts on all her loveliness ; his own character and inevitable fate are thus placed before him in sterner contrast ; and while nature, teeming with life, is rejoicing around him in the light of heaven’s goodness, he is going darkly down the road of endless ruin ; and each day, there are gathering upon his soul the coldness and the darkness of eternal death.

Is the fear of being lost, then, only the fear of fools ; and are they alone the men with whom wisdom shall die, who succeed in driving away serious thought, and flattering themselves in false peace, till their fear comes upon them as desolation, and their destruction as the whirlwind ? Ah, no ! “ The fear of the Lord that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.”

He who has been exercised by godly sorrow will not always continue in heaviness. He who goeth forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall, doubtless, return again rejoicing, bearing his sheaves with him.

New scenes have opened upon him now ; in the midst of his sorrows a friendly hand pointed him to Jesus ; a friendly voice repeated the inspired words, “ He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.” He has cast himself, without reserve, on infinite mercy in Christ ; the God of

all consolation has received back his banished ; and now, in unspeakable joy, he is saying, with his Saviour, " My father, and your father ; my God, and your God."

Love to God, who has done so great things for him, is the reigning principle of his heart now, and that love is evidenced by love to his brethren. He has seen the evil of sin, and he labours to destroy it—he remembers his own danger, and he is anxious to rescue others—he feels the blessing of peace in his own heart, and he desires to pour it largely into the hearts of all. His, therefore, is a religion which visits the widows and fatherless in their affliction, and keeps himself unspotted from the world. Where the poor and afflicted are; there is he, ministering to their wants, comforting them in their sorrows, and making known to them that **TRUTH** which is heaven's instrument for saving the soul. The world, however, still affect to despise him as one of "the Saints." He is too good for them, too zealous, too active ; his conduct rebukes them, and his life is an intolerable contrast to theirs. Yet, what is there irrational in any part of his conduct or of his motives ? He loves God. Is that folly ? Love to God prompts to love his word, his people, his service, and to seek communion with him. Therefore, he is a man of prayer, a man of benevolence ; he courts the society of the good, the Sabbath is his delight, the holy of the Lord and honourable, and God's service is to him perfect freedom. He delights to think on that heaven to which he is going, and out of the fulness of the heart his mouth speaks ; he cherishes a holy fear for his father's God, and, therefore, he uses with reverence his holy name ; he has freely received, and therefore he freely gives ; the first wish of his heart is to promote his Maker's glory, and therefore his time and his talents, his property, his life, his all, are devoted to him.

All this is surely true wisdom—wisdom for time, and wisdom for eternity ; a wisdom that will wear well, that will end well, and that will enlarge, through eternity, into closer and more accurate assimilation to the infinite wisdom of God. The religion of the Bible is the only true wisdom ; and all else, without it, is extreme folly. What though the philosopher made many discoveries, if he has lost his soul ; what though he travelled from effects to causes, far above all that went before him, if the great first cause was to him unknown ; and what, though Science shed her clearest light over this enlarged mind, if the sun of righteousness has never risen upon him.

With whatever discoveries he may have enriched philosophy; or whatever trophies he may have won for the glory of human genius, if he died ignorant of the things which belong to his peace, the remembrance of him is, beyond expression, mournful; and, with all his powers, and all his acquirements, he only adds another link to the melancholy chain of evidence that "with the talents of an angel a man may be a fool."

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## RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY.

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"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together, in the same mind and in the same judgment."—1st Cor. i. 10.

THERE is a unity of ignorance which we abhor, and for its destruction we would "set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother." There is a union of indifference, connecting men of the most opposite sentiments in religion, from regardlessness to all religious sentiments; and such union it shall be our constant aim to dissever; but there is a union of truth and of love, which, with all our hearts, we will cultivate and extend. We have no intention of proscribing all religious controversy as evil. On the contrary, we despise the sickly sentimentality which professes to find an argument against religion in the controversies which have been agitated respecting her doctrines. Where is the point in science which has not been most keenly contested; and where is the ground over the whole range of literature, which has not witnessed desperate conflicts? Let the philosopher, the politician, the man of the world, look well around them before they venture to pass a harsh judgment on religion, as furnishing the only ground for controversy.

So long as man continues imperfect, there must be controversy on religion, as well as on other subjects; and, far from having any objection to it, we encourage every individual to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good; and we solemnly charge those who know the "truth once delivered to the saints" to "contend earnestly" for it. What we oppose and deplore is, angry, personal controversy. With such controversy our unhappy country, and even our immediate neighbourhood, have been long and sorely cursed. It has been, and it continues still to be a subject of unfeigned grief to all

the truly good, that no benevolent enterprize can be undertaken among us, but immediately political violence, and sectarian hate, lay hold upon it for urging on their own purposes, and disturbing the public peace. Those whom ambition hurries headlong, know the power which, by means of religion, can be exercised over the public mind; and therefore they exert themselves to represent *their* interests as the interests of truth, and their quarrels as the quarrels of religion and of God.

Such schemes have, however, been practised too long and too openly to deceive the nations much longer; information is spreading rapidly, men are examining for themselves; and, what is better still, a love of peace is growing rapidly; and an anxious desire for cultivating it. It is fully time that it should be so. Christians have been too long employed in biting and devouring one another. The cause of God has been greatly dishonoured by unholy strife; the progress of the Gospel has been very much retarded by angry controversy, even among ministers of the Gospel.—Christian men, and especially Christian ministers, should have no time and no *inclination* for railing accusations; yet the friends of Jesus have had too much cause to be disgusted with the contentious spirit and bad passions manifested by men, who, whatever be their professions, do not act as messengers of peace.

We lift up our voice to all the lovers of peace throughout our country, calling upon them to unite with us in putting down every angry controversialist, who, gratifying his own passions, and, desirous merely of victory, disturbs the peace of Zion, and stirs up strife among those who should dwell together in unity.

Give no countenance to such a one, that he may be ashamed, and that the general interests of truth and peace may not suffer from the offences of an individual making, perhaps, high religious profession. Were the public not to purchase or read the vehicle of personal abuse, it would not be published, and thus the raging passions and evil speaking of the violent controversialist would be confined within his own dark bosom, and the contracted sphere of his injurious influence. A chief reason for so many publications of angry controversy having been disseminated is, that the depraved taste of many relished them, and thus the evil extended, and perpetuated itself; for while the victory was awarded, not to him who adduced most argument, but to him who called most nicknames, and said the

smartest and most mischievous things, a temptation to evil was placed before every writer who either delighted or got involved in controversy.

That better times have come, we have had most gratifying evidence, since the publication of our first number. The congratulations and assurances of support which we have received from all quarters, convince us that there are around us very many lovers of peace. Most gladly shall we act as the organ of such, in cementing and extending, and perpetuating peace. Most delightful would it be for us to know that in our pages the friends of the Lord Jesus Christ, in many denominations, see illustrated each month, the great doctrines of their common belief, the great principles of their common practice, and the exceeding great and precious promises of their common hope. The friends of Jesus have enough of enemies, without fighting with one another; they have enough of employment in examining their own hearts, without passing harsh judgments on their neighbours. To each individual among them the question is of too great importance, What shall *I* do to be saved? to allow time for idle speculation respecting the condemnation of his brethren.

Union in error, and union in sin are all around;—strange unions, indeed, we have seen in our day; why, then, should the friends of truth be disunited? Oh, brethren! for the sake of truth; for the sake of Jesus, your common Saviour; for your own souls' sake, and the souls of generations yet unborn, cease your contentions, and cultivate peace. The cultivation of peace, the cherishing of love to those who differ from you, but who, nevertheless, are your brethren, will in no way diminish your zeal for truth, or your earnestness for all that is really important in your peculiar views of doctrine and discipline. Far be it from us to ask you to sacrifice one jot of principle. Never sacrifice principle, whatever be the apparent good to be gained by it. But wherever, and whenever you can, without sacrifice of principle, meet your christian brother who holds the head, Christ Jesus, meet him in love—meet for mutual edification—meet for carrying forward, with one heart and one soul, the work of your common Master. While, then, christian brethren, you “hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering,” “stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel.” “Whereunto you have already attained, walk by the same rule, mind the same thing,” having before you, in the promise of a faithful God, this most delight-

ful encouragement, that "if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." Our spirits are cheered by a prospect of the extensive good which God may effect even by such humble instruments as ourselves, in spreading throughout the land, according to the language of a most influential and excellent correspondent, "a healing spirit; a spirit of mutual charity, forbearance, and condescension." We have begun our labours in the midst of violent controversy; at the very time when the spirit of discord is disturbing, throughout the country, the peace of churches and of families, and alienating those who had before been friends. Oh that we may soon see peace, the peace of the Gospel of Christ, reigning wide and far. Oh that God may not close our eyes in death till our native land has found, from blessed experience, that the work of righteousness is peace; and till, from the delightful prospect of Christian love reigning all around, we shall be able to point in triumph to the Church of Jesus, in its various branches, and say, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob! and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity; it is as the dew of Hermon, and the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

## TRIUMPH OF THE BIBLE IN IRELAND.

A PAMPHLET, entitled, "Triumph of the Bible in Ireland," has been published lately, under the superintendence of the Rev. Joseph Ivimey, of London, "containing extracts from three months' correspondence of the ministers and scripture readers, in the provinces of Connaught and Munster, belonging to the Baptist Irish Society."

The Baptist Irish Society was instituted in London, April, 1814; and at the present time it supports 91 week day schools, containing more than 10,000 poor children, principally Roman Catholics; and 25 evening schools for adults, during the winter; the number recently attending these being about 700. The Society also supports 6 itinerant ministers, (four of whom superintend the schools, and two of them preach in the Irish language), and 53 scripture readers. Its avowed object is to promote the knowledge of the Scriptures among the peasantry of Ireland, by teaching them to read, and to contents of the Bible to memory. No catechism

is permitted, and several of the school masters are Roman Catholics.

The following extracts from the pamphlet quoted, will illustrate the operations and success of the Society. "I inspected a school in Sligo," says one of their agents, "consisting of eighty Roman Catholic scholars, and not one Protestant. Each scholar, who had attained the age of thirteen, repeated thirteen chapters of the Bible, in English, and the same number in Irish; and in the twenty-six chapters, did not miss twenty-six words." "In visiting the schools," says another, "and especially the night schools, I have seen great numbers of aged and adult persons reading the Word of God." "Children," says a third, "read the Scriptures for their delighted parents, who cannot read for themselves." The language of a fourth is, "My house is crowded every night with old and young, from sixty to twelve years of age, all desirous of hearing the Bible read in the Irish language; the old men returning thanks to God for knowing how Christ lived and died, on earth, for poor sinners; having had no idea of the Scriptures in their lifetime before."

The happy results of such a system will be sufficiently illustrated by a few additional extracts.

Such has been the influence of reading the Bible, in a very wild and poor district round Killargue, that the number of persons performing penance at Zubber Muire, the holy well there, has greatly decreased. "Before the Scriptures were circulated here," said a respectable individual, "by means of the schools and readers, the number of pilgrims was innumerable; but now the devotees are comparatively few."

One of the prisoners in Sligo gaol, remarked, while reading the first commandment—"Does not that prove we are not to pray to any other than God: that is where we Romans are kept in the dark;" and when reading Mark vi. 13, he said, "Does not that prove it was to heal the body and not the soul, that the oil was used." The same man, while reading the second chapter of Acts, remarked, that "preaching the gospel was the key with which Peter opened the kingdom of heaven, and not such keys as the turnkeys used;" and when he asked a brother prisoner what the 20th verse of that chapter put him in mind of, the other replied, "that men are not justified by works, but faith." There are many in different Roman Catholic districts, who, though they have not connected themselves with any Protestant communion, have renounced the Mass; and having had their eyes opened to the errors of Romanism, read their

Bibles in private, and meet, as they can find opportunity, with those in similar circumstances, for reading, conversation, and prayer. The proofs are very numerous, that in large districts, the power and influence of the Romish Priesthood are declining. How extensive, rich, and permanent, are the blessings conferred by societies for promoting the scriptural education of the ignorant, and the dissemination of the Word of God.

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## ITINERATING LIBRARIES.

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WHILE all over the land, a literary taste is springing up, immediate and extensive plans must be adopted for its safe and beneficial exercise. Neat school-houses are now fashionable ornaments on gentlemen's estates; and gratuitous, and paid teachers are every where at work. We hear much of the "school master" being "abroad," of "the march of intellect," and the "nineteenth century;" but let us be cautious. That cultivation which even the poorest of the people are so extensively receiving, may be perverted, if not influenced by moral principle into a tremendous instrument of evil. Though the Bible should be in all hands, it cannot be expected, that even the most praiseworthy will confine to it their whole reading; and those who hear hawkers crying, "fourteen fashionable songs for a half-penny," can judge of the temptations thrown in the way of the thoughtless.

The number of books, throughout the country is extremely few; ours is not a reading population; and such is the poverty of the large proportion of Dissenting Clergy, that they are unable to purchase for themselves any thing deserving the name of libraries. Both the libraries connected with the Divinity Halls of the two great bodies of Presbyterians, in Ulster, would not make a decent library, for a single minister. If the people wish themselves and their children to be properly taught by their ministers, they should, by providing libraries for students of divinity, and establishing a ministerial library for each congregation, afford opportunities of information, for those who should read extensively and study deeply, for their benefit.

Important lessons respecting the nature of property in books are needed by many. Little good can be expected, so long as we value a book in the same way as we value a horse or a cow, merely by its being *ours*, and that it would bring a certain price. This is evidently the very lowest consideration respecting the value of a book. What is it to us that a book

belongs to the Great Mogul, if we get the free use of it; and in what situation can a book be half so useful, as where it is public property, where the poorest as well as the richest man in the land, has free access to it? It is a practice worthy only of a Gothic age, to divide public libraries, giving perhaps, as we have known frequently done, the first volume of a book to one, the third to another, and the second to a third, living at some ten miles distance from the other two.

We require not to be told of the extreme poverty of the people; we know it and deplore it; but we know, also, that a very impoverished people may become a reading and educated people, by means, not of private, but of public libraries.

Some years ago, an individual, in Belfast, begged about forty pounds, from a few friends, with which he purchased a number of the best religious works in the English language, as the foundation of a public circulating library. That library is connected with the Belfast Tract Depository, and now consists of nearly seven hundred volumes of most admirable works, which are the property of the public, that is, any person whatever, by paying a small sum, for defraying the wear of the books, and increasing their number, has as free liberty to use them as though they were, in the strictest sense of the words, his own.

What is there to prevent something of the same kind from being established in every village, and in every parish? Shall the mere selfish notion of a book being a man's *own*, prevent all from presenting to such a library, books which they themselves never read; and which, instead of being shut up from all opportunities of usefulness in their library cases, or wall-coves, might be travelling round and round among the population of a whole neighbourhood, extending information, and imparting blessings, to be handed down to the remotest ages; and to live amidst the light and blessedness of the world of glory, when all the riches, and distinctions, and fame of the present fleeting scene, shall have perished, and been forgotten for ever.

A much more effective plan of benefiting the public than even the establishment of stationary libraries, has been adopted and carried extensively into operation by Mr. Samuel Brown, of Haddington, grandson to the famous John Brown, one of the many ornaments of the Secession Church. The plan is simply this:—let a number of books, chiefly religious, though not exclusively so, be obtained; let these be separated into a number of divisions, according to the number of books; pro-

vide a stout case for each division, and let it be placed for a certain time, say two years, in a village, or parish, for the use of the inhabitants; at the end of the two years, let it be transferred to another place, and let another of the divisions occupy its room. Gratuitous librarians can every where be readily obtained, and by keeping some new books with each division, and charging a small sum for the use of these, not only can the remainder be lent gratis, but so much money be obtained as to meet the wear of the books, and provide a second set when the first has been worn out. Thus, the system perpetuates itself; thus, a constant variety of excellent books is presented, for creating and fostering the spirit of improvement; thus, the direction of the public mind is put into the hands of the good and wise; and all this at a very small expence; for each of the divisions, to which we have referred, with book case, and catalogue, and all little necessaries complete, may be obtained for ten Pounds.

We particularly recommend the consideration of this most useful system, to the ministers and managers of christian congregations, and to benevolent individuals, especially landed proprietors, who are anxious for the good of their tenantry. We shall cheerfully communicate information on the subject to any inquirer.

## THE POOR IN SPIRIT.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit.”

POOR in spirit is a spiritual state of heart. One condition in life may be more favourable than another to its production and growth; yet it has no necessary connexion with worldly circumstances. In worldly poverty, many, like the prodigal, are convinced of their spiritual need; while worldly riches, on the other hand, by fostering evil passions, do often close the heart against spiritual blessings. Still, worldly poverty does not secure poverty of spirit; nor do worldly riches exclude it. Daniel, a prime minister, and David, a king, were possessed of this spiritual state of heart, as well as Lazarus, a beggar, and the first preachers of the cross, who for Christ's sake made themselves poor as to earthly possessions, that they might make many rich in imperishable good.

By nature all are poor as to their spiritual condition before God. In many respects indeed, men may be rich. They

may be rich temporally, rich in houses and lands, in money and merchandize, and all that constitutes this world's good ; they may be rich mentally ; rich in talent, learning, science, and whatever constitutes intellectual wealth : they may be rich in social virtue ; distinguished for estimable qualities and praiseworthy deeds, possessed of honour, generosity, patriotism, public spirit ; but, though rich in all these respects, they may be far from being rich toward God. There may be no true piety in their hearts ; no love to God ; no penitential sorrow for sin ; no supplication for pardon ; no coming to the Saviour ; no delight in religious exercises ; no chief aim to glorify God ; no striving and pressing anxiety to enter into his kingdom.—What is the estimate which the Judge on high, forms of such ? However rich they may be in their own eyes, and in the eyes of men, he sees, that in regard to the claims of His law, a state of heart right with him, works really good, fitness for heaven, they are poor, miserably poor. This is not all—empty of spiritual good, the hearts of sinners are filled with spiritual evil. In some, the avaricious passions predominate, in some, the malignant, in others, the licentious ; but the same ungodliness, the same enmity to religion, the same carnal mind, governs all. That we are all by nature spiritually poor is an awful fact ; and an experimental persuasion of this is necessary to open the heart to the reception of saving blessings. It is, itself, in truth, a saving blessing. Various worldly distinctions subsist among men ; but, with respect to our spiritual condition, we are all involved in one common bankruptcy and ruin. Sin has robbed us of the image and favour of God ; stripped us of innocence and peace, and left us poor indeed. Some are more aggravated offenders than others ; but all have sinned. We are all guilty, and need forgiveness ; unholy, and need washing ; lost, and need salvation.

While all, by nature, are spiritually poor, the real christian only, is possessed of the blessedness of being "poor in spirit." This is no fanatical fancy ; it is a divine reality. It is not the creation of the natural mind ; it is a gift of divine mercy. Till taught of God, we do not love or value this spiritual state of heart ; on the contrary, while under the dominion of the carnal mind, we regard it with aversion, as though it interfered with our happiness ; or treat it with disdain, as though it were absurdity and foolishness. "The carnal mind is enmity against God ;" and "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."—Rom.

viii. 7. 1st Cor. ii. 14. Pride, self-righteousness, and false peace, we are unwilling to relinquish. Self-denial, brokenness of spirit, the mortification of our besetting sin, the total abandonment of our own righteousness as a ground of trust for acceptance, are processes of heart to which we are reluctant to submit. Something less painful, less humiliating; something more indulgent, more flattering to self, is what charms us most. We love not to be poor, but to be proud in spirit. Pride, however, must be cast out; and we must become poor in spirit if we would enter into the kingdom of God. This does not originate with ourselves. In point of fact, no one ever did, or ever will, become poor in spirit but by divine influence: experience shows that it is so, and reason concurs with Scripture in proving that it cannot be otherwise; for if every effect must have an adequate cause, the carnal mind cannot be the author of the spiritual principle in itself; neither can the divine life be begotten in the soul but by the "Spirit of life" making us "free from the law of sin and death." The Holy Ghost, therefore, is the supreme agent; and the word of *truth* the grand instrument in the production of poverty of spirit. Accompanied by his energy, the Word enters the heart, quick and powerful, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. The light of truth streams in on the mind; our false confidence is smitten as with a thunder-shock; the conscience heaves with agitation and alarm; we feel that we must be born again; and that unless we win Christ, and be found in him, we must perish for ever.

I. A deep sense of our unworthiness and of our spiritual need, is an essential part of that experience which we must feel, if poor in spirit. What goodness, what wisdom, what worth have we before God? We are conscious that we are empty and destitute. Far from saying in heart, we are wise enough, good enough, safe enough; far from saying we are "rich and have need of nothing;" taught to know ourselves, we say, we are "wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Far from supposing, that by the works of righteousness which we do, we can lay the Almighty under any obligations, we confess ourselves unprofitable servants, and that did he deal with us after our sins, we should for ever be excluded from his presence and kingdom. Instead of boasting before God, like the Pharisee, of our doings and attainments, and thanking him that we are not as other men; instead of cherishing the pride of virtue, and the still more detestable pride of religion; instead of trusting to ourselves that we are righteous, and des-

pising others ; instead of saying contemptuously to our brethren, stand by yourselves, for we are holier than you, wiser than you sounder than you, higher in the divine favour than you ; clothed with humility we confess ourselves guilty before God, we entreat him not to enter into judgment with us, and say after the penitent Publican, “ God be merciful to us sinners.”

II. A sense of depravity, as well as of spiritual destitution, is part of the experience of all who are poor in spirit. They boast no more of their goodness of heart ; they know too much of their forgetfulness of God, of their insensibility under his mercies and his chastisements, of their heartlessness in his service, of their base ingratitude to their Redeeming Lord ;—they are too deeply conscious of time mispent, talents abused, resolves violated, convictions quenched, lusts indulged, the great salvation neglected, a frightful array of sins thronging around the judgment-seat against them ; not to feel that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. This they feel, and feel penitentially in the presence of God. Prostrate before his mercy-seat, they bewail the sad disorder of their nature, and deplore with strong crying and tears, the rebelliousness of their hearts. Presenting the sacrifice of a broken and contrite spirit, the penitent will say, alas ! this heart of mine, made for thy love and service, has gone sadly astray ; it has been the dupe of a thousand foolish schemes, and hurtful passions ; deeply do I feel how evil it is ; “ Behold, I am vile ; wherefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

III. The poor in spirit, knowing themselves, own the justice of the sentence that condemns them. They cover not, but confess their sins, and instead of attempting to excuse them, sorrow over their complicated guilt. God, they clear and justify—themselves, they censure and condemn. Is not he whom we have offended the best of beings, and infinitely worthy of our love ? Is not the law which we have violated holy, just, and good ; requiring nothing but what is essential to our happiness ? Nor is it for transgressions against the law only, that we deserve condemnation ; we are rebels against mercy. Have we turned as we should at the beseeching calls of our Father in heaven ? Have we not slighted his salvation, and hardened ourselves against his forbearance and love ? how have we neglected the great sacrifice ! how have we crucified the Son of God afresh, by wicked works, and forced madly on to destruction, though the arresting cross stood so awfully and beseechingly in our way ! Where is the soul truly poor in spirit ?—That soul feels deeply its sinfulness ; it feels that if saved, it must be wholly of grace ; that no injustice would be done it, were it

punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord ; and it ceases not to bewail and to condemn in itself those sins which it has learned to hate and to forsake ; and which it earnestly trusts and prays that God, for Christ's sake, may freely forgive and not impute, to its condemnation.

IV. A sense of spiritual helplessness is also felt. To ransom, or to regenerate ourselves, we are wholly without power. A doctrinal admission of helplessness is not enough ; there must be an experimental conviction of it. Pay that thou owest, is the language of the law. The sinner alarmed, but ignorant, replies, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. He makes the vain attempt ; but, after a series of fruitless efforts, he is taught that "by the law is the knowledge of sin," yet, that "by the deeds of the law no flesh living can be justified." Still the question returns, and returns with engrossing and agitating interest, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord ; what must I do to be saved ?" Can the sinner, depraved, criminal, condemned, present any offering of his own available to his acceptance ? Can he satisfy the law ? Can he make atonement ? Were he constituted from this time forth perfectly and infallibly sinless, is there not an immense arrear of transgression to be accounted for ? Feeling this,

V. The poor in spirit, no longer seek to establish their own righteousness, but submit themselves to God's method of justifying the sinner, through faith in the obedience and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This is the foundation of trust, and they build on it ; this is the refuge, and they fly to it for shelter. Finding no rest in the fiery law, driven away by the thunder of its curse, they betake themselves to Christ ; they seek the protection of his atoning blood ; and they find safety, and not only safety, but hope, and peace, and joy. Some sacrifice we must bring before God ; but the sacrifice which faith brings, is the merits of Christ's propitiation. This, faith holds up, and presents, and pleads before the throne. We say, here is a sacrifice of thine own wise and merciful providing. May we have redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins. Make us to be accepted in the Beloved. Impute not our trespasses to us, but impute righteousness for Christ's sake. Thus, the poor in spirit, "submit themselves unto the righteousness of God ; for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth." "They desire to win Christ, and be found in him, not having their own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ."—Rom. x. 3. ; Phil. iii. 9.

VI. The poor in spirit feel their need of looking unto Jesus

or all their spiritual supplies, as well as for redemption through his blood. He is the living and lifegiving head of his people, as well as their atoning High Priest. It hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; it is therefore their constant care to abide in him, that they may receive of his fulness. In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; his riches are unsearchable; as the covenant head of his people, he is the trustee and depository of all saving blessings; to him, therefore, do the poor in spirit apply for the mercies which they need. Empty and destitute, they seek the supply of his Spirit; conscious of their weakness, knowing the treachery of their hearts, and the wiles of the adversary, they come to Him for grace to help in time of need. Poor in themselves, they are rich in Him. As the wife shares, by virtue of her marriage, in all her husband's wealth and honours, the soul united to Christ, becomes a partaker of all his blessings and triumphs. Having him, though destitute of this world's wealth, we possess all things. "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."—1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.

VII. Humility, in reference to the understanding, must also be taken into account. Fanaticism discards reason; infidelity idolizes it; but the Christian humbly and thankfully employs it in ascertaining the mind of the Spirit, speaking in the word of revelation. There is no contradiction between faith and reason, rightly understood; for faith is the exercise of reason in receiving the testimony of God. Men may invent certain religious systems, determine first to consider them as true, and then proceed to interpret the Bible by them—and they may call this reason. This is not reason, but presumption; it is making intellect the judge and teacher of revelation, instead of making revelation the judge and teacher of intellect. The very circumstance of a revelation being given us, shows that there are truths which we could not know without its light, or would not receive without its sanction. Receiving the Bible as a revelation from God, it is the height of wisdom and of reason to receive its testimony on every point; knowing that no demonstration can be stronger than this, God hath said so, and therefore it must be true. The pride of reason, as well as of merit, must be cast down. God requires the submission of our understandings to his truth, as well as of our will and our affections to his Government and law. Poor in spirit—we will gladly apply to that sacred book which contains the oracles of God, and which is able to make us wise to salvation. Conscious of the darkness of our minds, we will seek the teaching of the spirit of wisdom and revelation to open the

eyes of our understandings in all saving knowledge. And here is his promise, "The meek will he guide in judgment ; the meek will he teach his way."

VIII. To crown all, the poor in spirit, sensible of their natural wretchedness, and of the insufficiency of all earthly good to satisfy the soul, seek their supreme felicity in God only. He is the fountain of life ; and separated from him, we must be miserable. As long as we are at enmity with our Maker, no amount of worldly wealth, no earthly enjoyment however innocent, can make us truly happy ; and we are made to feel, by outward ills and inward anguish, a sense and witness of his displeasure. The soul thirsts for happiness, but the poisoned fountain of sinful pleasure, instead of imparting real delight, only inflames our distemper and aggravates our misery. It is only in being reconciled to God, and having our sins forgiven us, that we can find rest for our souls. Freed from feverish and fretful yearnings after earthly good, our hearts pant after heavenly blessings. The curse is taken away from the world, and, in the true sense, it is now only that we begin to enjoy it. With respect to our outward condition, or our future provision in life, we entertain no distressing anxiety ; the peace of God keeps our hearts and minds ; we know that the wise and kind providence of our heavenly Father superintends all our concerns ; and that he will make all things work together for our good. Are we prosperous ? We remember that the soul is the grand concern. Are we afflicted ? We consider that it must be for our profit. Have we riches ? We so employ them on earth, that we may lay up treasure in heaven. Are we in poverty ? We console ourselves with the thought, that God sees this to be for our salvation ; and that he hath "chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom."

Such are the poor in spirit. *What is the peculiar blessedness which our Lord pronounces respecting them ? "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* In expounding this, it is not enough to say, that heaven shall be theirs at death. *Theirs is the kingdom of heaven ; they enjoy a present salvation ; they have everlasting life ; they are washed ; they are justified and sanctified ; their title to heaven is secured by virtue of their union to him who has opened up the way by his expiation, entered as their forerunner, and taken possession of it as their head, and their meetness for it is becoming daily more complete. The kingdom of God is theirs ; they have entered in ; it is set up in their hearts, even that "kingdom which consists, not in meats or in drinks, but in righteousness, and peace, and*

oy in the Holy Ghost." Their sins are blotted out; the emper, the love, the worship, the happiness of heaven, have ommenced in their hearts. The fruits of the spirit, love, joy, nd peace, and gentleness, and goodness, come forth like the ising corn in spring-time, and cover and adorn their souls. Angels rejoice; God looks down with approbation; gladness s put into their hearts; and even here below, they enjoy, in he midst of many earthly ills, a prelibation of the stingless nd imperishable pleasures of the heavenly world.

Are you rich in this world's wealth? Remember that your wealth is no necessary obstacle to your becoming poor in spirit; t will not be a substitute for this blessing, it will not justify our neglect or want of it. But earthly riches may be abused, nd in innumerable instances are abused, so as to exclude it om the soul; wherefore, be warned of this danger. Except ou become poor in spirit, you cannot see the kingdom of iod, and what is a man profited, should he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

Are you destitute of this world's good? Poverty as well as ches, may be made the enemy of salvation. You have a ouble incentive to seek after durable riches. The ills of time hould warn us to fly from the wrath to come; for what is it to be wretched, and miserable, and poor here, when compared to eternity? Though poor as to this world, wisdom, and faith, nd piety, and whatever constitutes real worth, may dwell in ou richly. Thousands of the wealthy and the great, may envy you in that day when no difference of opinion shall exist to the chief good. What a testimony to have from the Judge f all, "I know thy works and thy tribulation, and thy pover-  
y, but thou art rich."

Let not the poor in spirit despond. Think of the fulness f blessing which is to be found in Christ Jesus. Does a nse of your demerit deter you from coming to him? Be mboldened by his invitation, and be assured that you shall in o wise be cast out. Let his promises cheer and encourage ou. Is it not written, "the Lord is nigh unto them that are f a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit?" Has he not said, "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst f righteousness, for they shall be filled?" Has he not aid, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom f heaven?"

Let not the proud presume. Are the poor in spirit *blessed*, according to the word of Christ? Then wretched and miserabie must be the proud in Spirit. They are strangers to the faith and repentance of the Gospel. They have a far dif-

ferent father from Him who is above ; and the envy and malice, and lying and hatred, and strife and revenge, which agitate their bosoms, bear inward witness that, even *here* and *now* theirs is the kingdom, but *not* of heaven—theirs is the kingdom of hell.

Let rich and poor be persuaded to set their hearts on spiritual blessings. Unlike earthly good, these satisfy the soul and last for ever. Here there is no disappointment in pursuit, dissatisfaction in enjoyment, or uncertainty in possession.—Here there is no vanity or vexation of spirit. Here the possessors do not thwart or envy each other, but all rejoice together. Here we cannot be too earnest, too covetous, too ambitious. Happy are they who are rich toward God ; who abound in wisdom and in love ; and who are filled with the fruits of righteousness.

Let the kingdom of heaven command decision and earnestness, on the part of all. It is present as well as future. Has it been established in your hearts ? What evidence have you of this ? Have you any anxiety on the subject ? Have you begun to seek the kingdom of God ? Neglect not—delay not—be in earnest—be determined—and be so *now*. “ Strive to enter in.” “ The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.”

All who are *poor in spirit* are *prayerful in spirit*—Feeling that without the mercies of salvation, they must perish for ever, they come continually to the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy and find grace to help them in time of need. Every returning night, and every successive day, they present themselves importunate supplicants at the mercy seat ; “ praying with all prayer in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.” Satisfy us early with thy mercy ; visit us with thy salvation, is the burthen of their cry : nor do they cry in vain ; “ for he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.” What is the testimony of the suppliant’s experience ? “ This poor man cried, the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.” Such are the poor in spirit. They are *prayerful*. “ This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O God of Jacob.”

CEPHAS.

## NEGRO SLAVERY.

*To the Editors of the CHRISTIAN FREEMAN.*

GENTLEMEN,—You call your work *The Christian Freeman*, and you attack Negro Slavery. This is consistent, this is

what the world wants ; for ah ! how often, and how deplorably, does it occur, that they who call themselves *Christians*—that is, the *freemen* of Christ, or the *Christ-like* men, let the most atrocious crimes, such as *Negro Slavery*, alone ; or even make or admit excuses for them, provided the *honorable corruptions* of the state of society in which they live, exclaim not, Shame !!

But one attack upon an inveterate evil is not sufficient to prove consistency in assailing it. Wickedness is a hard fighter. A single inordinate affection grapples to the last against the truth which would extirpate it ; but when, as in the case of despotic power, all the inordinate affections of the human heart are concentrated ; when pride, lust, selfishness, avarice, prejudice, matured by age, and fortified by long cherished and established sophistries, concur to support crime, how aggravated is the difficulty, and what more abundant faithfulness and boldness in Christ are requisite to conquer it.

I trust, therefore, that the extract (page 18, &c.) in your first number, is but the beginning of a series of articles, which, through the blessing of Christ, shall help to bring the oppressor to repentance, and to restore to the bosom of the poor negro the hope which is all but extinguished there.

What is negro slavery ? It is a state of society, in our West India Colonies, and in the Cape of Good Hope, and the Mauritius, to the south and east, in which one set of the king's subjects are the *slaves* of another set of the king's subjects ; the master class being upwards of 200,000, and the slaves, upwards of 800,000. The colonies above mentioned are 18 or 20 in number ; five or six of them are, or ought to be, governed by the crown, and are called *Crown Colonies* ; 13 of them are governed by their own Legislatures, and are called *Chartered Colonies* ; and one, Honduras, has a mixed Government.

The present law of the Crown Colonies, recently enacted, and poorly, if at all yet, carried into effect, is exceedingly superior to the existing laws of the Chartered Colonies, in every thing which denotes wisdom in the Government, or which promises security to the governed. The laws of the Chartered Colonies differ considerably, but not fundamentally. They are all an intolerable disgrace to the country, and to the age.—Let me speak here of Jamaica, alone, that I may avoid undue detail, and because Jamaica is the queen of our negro slave system.

Slavery, then, in Jamaica, is a state of Society in which the masters have authority by law, to flog, imprison, sell, and

separate their slaves at pleasure; in which the slaves cannot marry without their owners' consent; and in which a man's wife and children belong to his master and not to himself. It is a state in which the property of slaves is not secured; in which their evidence in law is very partially admitted, except against one another. It is a state from which they can never get free without their owner's consent; in which they must generally either work on the Sabbath day or starve; in which the great body of them, men, women, and children, are driven before the whip, like beasts, to work beyond their strength; in which they generally have not a sufficiency of food or clothing; and in which they have little or no protection from any cruel or criminal passion of their masters. It is a state in which they must not resist the violence of their masters; in which they must not murmur; from which they must not fly; in which, if striving to escape from oppression, however desperate, the mother must not screen her child, nor the husband his wife.—It is a state in which they are liable to be seized and sold at any moment, for their master's debts or taxes; and in which they must not receive or communicate a word of instruction without their master's leave.—See *Jamaica Slave Law*, as published by authority, 6th December, 1831.—Trew (or Ignotus) *Jeremie, &c.*

This is the state from which the friends of humanity and the servants of God, are labouring to rescue their unoffending fellow-subjects; for it is a fact scarcely to be credited, yet indubitably true, that the 800,000 men, women and children, who are subjected to it are unoffending British subjects; almost all of them born within the king's dominions; not even accused of any crime as the cause of the complicated outrages which they are suffering; and with as fair and good a right to liberty as the best man in the land, or as the king has to his *crown.*

Expecting shortly to occupy farther space in your pages, I pray affectionately that your Periodical may ever deserve its noble title.

C. STUART.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN FREEMAN.]

## CONSOLATION FOR THE FATHERLESS AND WIDOW.

“Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me.”—JER. xlii. 11.

ONE of the most affecting scenes we can contemplate in this vale of tears, is the death of a good man, who leaves behind

him a numerous and desolate family. At his bed-side stands the beloved wife of his youth, in speechless agony, while tears, in rapid succession, trickle down her pale and furrowed cheeks. His little children, though not fully aware of the loss they have sustained, vent their sorrows in unavailing lamentations. Pious friends, like the affectionate Jews who "came to Martha and Mary to comfort them concerning their brother," enter the house of mourning, and express their commiseration by their sorrowful looks, and importunate prayers. The sable coffin is brought, in which the cold body is inclosed. The strokes of the hammer announce that the lid, on which the name and the age are inscribed, is secured. The melancholy procession moves on to the silent mansions of the dead. The yawning grave receives its prey—the mould descends with hollow sound—the crowd disperses, and the frail widow and children return, with trembling steps, to their dreary habitation. The man who could view such a solemn scene without feeling the pangs of pity, is certainly unworthy of the Christian name, and has no resemblance to that compassionate Redeemer who "wept at the grave of Lazarus."

However much to be deplored the death of a good man is, his removal is great gain to him. His pure and immortal spirit is wafted by angels to the throne of God. Ample provision is made for the preservation and comfort of the fatherless and widow, who are left behind. They should not sorrow as those who have no hope. The precious promise, which cheered the mind of the dying parent when he bade them farewell, pronounced his last blessing, and committed them to God, should afford abundant consolation to them.

In every society, however small, a widow or an orphan may be found. Where a vast multitude is assembled, the number of the desolate must be greatly increased. The young person who is now guarded and cherished by a tender father, may soon be a lonely orphan. The female who is now caressed by a faithful husband may soon be a solitary widow. Some have witnessed the death of their wives and all their children. We may see an aged man, tottering on the brink of the tomb as lonely as the withered tree in the desert, or the hoary rock on the strand. What has been the lot of thousands may soon be our own.

When persons are united in marriage, delightful prospects are opened up to their view. With the pencil of a vivid imagination scenes of future felicity are pourtrayed. At a marriage festival the aged renew their strength, and for a moment forget their bodily infirmities. The heart of the young is as gay as

the lark that ascends with her songs to the skies. The bonds of matrimony may soon be severed by the relentless arm of death. The nuptial bed may soon be exchanged for the dark and silent grave. The man who is surrounded with relations who are as dear to him as his own soul, may, in a few years, be as lonely as the pelican of the wilderness, or the sparrow on the house top. He who now hails the approach of friends with acclamations of joy, may soon sing that doleful dirge, "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and my acquaintance into darkness."—Psal. lxxxviii. 18.

It cannot be unseasonable at any time to meditate on that comprehensive promise which is prefixed to this essay. The time is fast approaching when affectionate and pious parents *must leave* their children. On this event, which is unavoidable, early calculation should be made. At no period of human life should we indulge ourselves in criminal security. The most powerful constitution will soon be impaired and demolished. The oak must fall, as well as the slender stem which supports the transient flower. The arm of the giant will be palsied, as well as the feeble strength of the little child.—"What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?"—Psal. lxxxix. 49. How few patriarchs can be found who have escaped the desolations of a century? How few witness the succession of three or four generations? How many fade "as the grass upon the house tops, which withereth afore it growtheth up?"

Parents are anxious to *leave* their families in comfortable circumstances. For the accomplishment of their designs, they are willing to make great sacrifices. They rise up early and sit up late, "to eat the bread of sorrows." Some have followed their laborious employments, with such assiduity and perseverance, that they might adopt the words of Jacob, "in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes;" some have encountered the billows of the deep and the horrors of the battle-field; some have left their native land, the companions of their youth, and the house in which they worshipped the God of their Fathers, and emigrated to distant climes, that they might procure an *asylum* for their families, "in the waste howling wilderness;" some endeavour, by marriage contracts, to secure to their children a competent support, and sacrifice their feelings for the attainment of worldly prosperity. We are not to suppose, that a father should be inattentive to the temporal interests of his children.—1 Tim. v. 8. But while parents are careful and

troubled about many things, the one thing needful should not be forgotten.

Parents, when leaving their children, should commit them to God. The patriarch Jacob, blessed Joseph and his sons.—Gen. xlvi. 15, 16. Nor is it only at death this surrender should be made. It should be done, not only in their baptism, but in daily prayers to the giver of all good, through the whole course of the parent's life. How can it be expected, that we can with sincerity and confidence cast them upon the providential care of God, if their religious education has been neglected, and the voice of social prayer never heard in our habitation?

Parents, when dying should, with the utmost freedom, resign their children to God, and not be disquieted about their future safety and happiness. If they leave them to the care of guardians, who may be unfaithful to their trust, have they not much greater encouragement to depend on *Him* who is the widow's stay and the orphan's shield? Many examples might be produced to illustrate the loving kindness of God, in whom "the fatherless findeth mercy." Kind friends have been raised up in providence, to comfort the widow and protect the orphan. After the death of parents, the fatherless have been elevated to a state of worldly prosperity, which according to human conjectures could never have been expected, and have been eminently distinguished for their abilities and usefulness, both in church and state. The blessing of God has descended upon the substance of the widow. The widow woman, of Zarephath, who gave "a morsel of bread," to an hungry prophet, had no reason to complain of her penury or her donation. "The barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruise of oil fail." "She, and he, and her house, did eat many days." One of the miracles performed by our blessed Lord evinced his compassion for the fatherless and widow. When he, and many of his disciples, came nigh to the gate of the city of Nain, "Behold there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and much people of the city was with her; and when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare *him* stood still. And he said, young man, I say unto thee, arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother."—Luke vii. 12-15. Such a wonderful display of divine grace and power, though similar miracles are not to be expected, affords encouragement to the dying father to confide in that promise, "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me."

J. R.

## RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE.

CONGREGATIONAL UNION OF IRELAND.—The Annual Meeting of the above association of Congregational Churches, formed for the maintenance of christian intercourse, and the conducting of home missionary labour, was held in Moy, on Wednesday, 31st. ultimo.—On Tuesday evening, an introductory discourse was delivered by Rev. Robert M'Master, from 2 Cor. v. 11. On Wednesday morning, the annual prayer meeting was held, when several ministers engaged in the devotional services. At 11 o'Clock, the Rev. N. Sheppard, of Newry, preached an impressive sermon, from Ephes. v. 14. After the service, the business of the UNION was transacted. James Reid, Esq. Treasurer, in the chair. The Annual Report was read by the Rev. James Carlile, of Belfast. In this it was stated that the Committee had succeeded in accomplishing in some manner, all the objects contemplated by the UNION. They had occupied by a stated or occasional ministry, several important and encouraging missionary stations, and they had succeeded in making arrangements for the education of young men of piety and talent for the Ministry.

Several resolutions were moved, seconded, and unanimously passed. These, with the Annual Report, and Treasurer's Account, will soon be published.

ANECDOTE.—David Hume, the infidel, observed, that all the devout persons he had ever met with were melancholy. On this Bishop Horne remarked—This might be true; for first, it is mostly likely that he saw very few, his friends being of another sort; and, secondly, the sight of him would make a devout man melancholy at any time.

## ORIGINAL POETRY.—THE JUBILEE.

"In the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof; it shall be a jubilee unto you."—Leviticus xxv. 9 10.

THE trumpet note hath sounded, the chosen ones are free,  
The horror of the dungeon hath heard the jubilee;  
The sun of truth has risen, on continent and isle,  
Tahiti's glens and Caffre-land have caught the living smile;  
The men who sat in darkness, have raised a glad acclaim,  
To hail the dawning glory, and shout the Saviour's name.  
Extensive as the day beams, his empire soon shall be,  
For all the earth shall worship him, and keep the jubilee;  
But tremble ye rebellious, his banners are displayed,  
And Jesus comes in majesty and mightiness arrayed,  
His garments red with slaughter, his eyes a flame of fire,  
To tread his foes in anger, and trample them in ire.